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# MIRACLES:

## *AN ARGUMENT AND A CHALLENGE.*

BY

SAMUEL COX, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "A COMMENTARY ON JOB," ETC.

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# PREFACE.

THE following essay is composed of three Articles which appeared in *The Expositor* for A.D. 1882 and 1883. In its earlier form it attracted an unusual share of attention, and I have been much pressed to reprint it in a separate and more convenient form, both by many young men who profess to have derived benefit from it, and who therefore wish to put it into the hands of certain of their comrades, and by many ministers and clergymen who love young men, and long to save them from drifting into a cold and barren scepticism. As a rule, publishers do not look on small books with favourable eyes. But at last I am able

to comply with the request by which I have been honoured. And it will be a very great reward for any trouble I have been at, if I should find that the argument here offered to them has proved an "aid to faith" to any of the class to which it is specially addressed.

In writing it out I made no attempt to be original. I endeavoured rather to gather up in a compact and handy form the argument in favour of *Miracles* which now commends itself to the more thoughtful and intelligent advocates of the Christian Faith. I drew my materials, as I have confessed, mainly from a chapter in Newman Smyth's *Old Faiths in New Light*, from one of Godet's *Lectures in Defence of the Christian Faith*, and from an essay of my own on *Prayer*, which appeared in *The Expositor* for A.D. 1877. I was also indebted for valuable suggestions to my friends T. T. Lynch and Dr. Wace. The germs of my argument are also, as I have since ascertained, to be found in the writings of

Horace Bushnell and Edward Irving. Indeed, I doubt whether they are absent from the works of any considerable member of the broader school of theology, from the time of Coleridge down to the present day. And, finally, this argument has been woven into a treatise of extraordinary force by William Arthur, M.A., which has appeared since these Articles were published. It is called the Fernley Lecture for 1883 (London: T. Woolmer); its theme is *The Difference between Physical and Moral Law*, and in developing his theme, Mr. Arthur meets, and in my judgment triumphantly refutes, the sceptical or infidel arguments of Comte, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, and George Henry Lewes. If young men, "perplext by doubt," will but study this elaborate and masterly treatise as carefully as it deserves, they will soon "beat their music out."

I lay stress on the non-originality of the substance of my main line of argument for two

reasons. (1) I want my readers to feel that they are not listening to a single voice, but to the blended and consenting voices of many of the men to whom the Church and the world owe most, and that, therefore, the argument here presented, however imperfectly, is really worthy of their best consideration.

And (2) I want, if I can, to provoke a response to the challenge with which my essay concludes from some candid and able opponent of the Christian Faith. I have read, I think, nearly all that the leading sceptics and agnostics have said on the subject of Miracles, but I have never fallen in with any reply to the argument contained in the last chapter of this book. And it is high time that such a reply, if reply is to be had, were forthcoming. For this argument is not mine, nor is it new. It is at least fifty years old, and it has satisfied men as sincere and as able as any of those who reject the conclusion to which it conducts. There are many of us

who are eager to hear what can be said on the other side, who would listen to a counter-argument with candour and respect, and who, if fairly convinced of its superior force, would frankly acknowledge our defeat. We crave the truth, and truth in forms which the reason can grasp and defend. We believe that we hold the truth, and that we offer it to others on reasonable grounds. And so far from fearing any candid and sincere opposition, we respectfully invite the friends of reason and truth to drive us from the ground on which we stand, if they can. Will any of them take up the challenge? Let them reply to our argument either as it is briefly unfolded in this brief essay, or, better still, as it is philosophically and polemically elaborated in Mr. Arthur's most valuable treatise.

S. COX.

*Nottingham.*

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# MIRACLES.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE ORIGINAL MIRACLE.

It is curious and a little pitiful to note how Design and Evolution are pitted against each other—as if the one were contrary to the other—in much of the controversial literature of the day, and how this illogical conflict on a false issue culminates, just where it should find no place, at the annual meetings of the British Association. For, surely, it is not only obvious that evolution may be simply a method in which the creative design is worked out, but also that, if it be, it implies a design far more subtle

profound, and far-reaching than that involved in the older hypothesis of successive acts of creation. If the whole infinitely varied round of nature has been *pro-duced* from a single point, if, so to speak, the whole universe has grown from a single seed, He who created that seed—assuming for a moment that it had a Creator—and stored up in it the potencies which it has unfolded and is to unfold through incalculable æons, must have possessed a wisdom which we can hardly distinguish from Omniscience, and a power which we can hardly distinguish from Omnipotence; and all the marks of design which we trace in the unfolded flower must speak to us of a forethought more, and not less, wonderful and divine than if that flower had been built up petal by petal and touched in tint by tint.

(2) Whether or not Evolution be the most fitting and adequate word to describe, for the present, the genesis of the universe, there can

be no doubt that a vast process of development has taken place; for all the sciences—*e.g.* astronomy, geology, embryology—point to it with one consent, and all the results of observation and experience as they are read off by the most competent interpreters. And yet, on consideration, even the most advanced and sceptical philosopher must admit that Evolution is not and cannot be the *final* word of science, though it be the last it has yet uttered. For it does not cover and explain all the facts of which science takes cognizance, nor even the ultimate and fundamental facts; as, for example, the origin of matter and force (if these be two, and not one), the origin of life, the origin of consciousness. Great and marvellous as is the advance which science has made during the last fifty years, those who most triumphantly proclaim its advance, and are most competent to appreciate it, will be the last to deny that it has still greater victories to achieve in the future,

and that it is very far from having reached its goal. It will yet discover some higher law, speak some larger, nobler word—a word, perchance, which will cover and illuminate the fundamental problems which for the present it is compelled to leave unsolved, or even untouched. To pronounce Evolution the final word, to ban all who do not implicitly accept it as an adequate solution of the whole mystery of the universe, is therefore to sin, as against science herself, so also against that law of progress which has as surely governed all human discoveries as it has marked all the successions of nature. While, on the other hand, to deny development, to doubt that through the whole realm of nature there has been a slow, laborious, and gradual ascent from simple to more complex, from inferior to higher forms, is to be wilfully blind and deaf to the teaching of all the facts within our reach.

(3) It has been the constant misfortune of

Science to number among her votaries men who have so little of her spirit as to fulminate anathemas against all who do not accept her last as her final word, and adjust the whole circle of their beliefs to what may be only an unverifiable hypothesis, and is sure to prove an inadequate solution of the great problem. These bigots of science are as truly the worst enemies of science as the bigots of the church are the worst enemies of true religion. And he is the truly scientific man who rebukes and withstands these hasty and ignorant bigots in the name of science herself; and who, as he glances at the long muster roll of her triumphs, finds in it ample space for more and more glorious inscriptions than those which have already been so fairly written and so splendidly illuminated upon it. But even the bigots of science—no, nor even the hypocrites of science who, knowing more and better than her bigots, nevertheless stoop to support their narrow

intolerant dogmas and to swell the volume of their anathemas—are not so untrue to their high calling and vocation as are those who, professing to believe in God as the Maker of all things and the Saviour of all men, nevertheless fear lest any accurate interpretation of his works should convict Him of having contradicted Himself, convict Him of being double-minded and double-voiced, so that, unless they "lie for Him," the "truth" cannot be known or cannot prevail. The perversion is so monstrous and unnatural that no severer condemnation of it is possible than the bare statement of it. Yet who can deny that there have been many "good men" who have thought to do God service by both misreading the Bible and refusing to read the book of science; *i.e.* by closing their eyes against the plain facts both of Scripture and of the natural universe?

(4) There is perhaps no one subject, there is surely no one document, which the bigots,

whether of science or of religion, have treated with more intolerable unfaithfulness and insincerity than the ancient tradition of the origin of all things which Moses has inserted in, with which he has commenced, the Book of Genesis. Yet, viewed fairly, looked at with the open eyes that desire the truth, with due consideration of its date, purpose, method, it may be doubted whether there is any one document over which true science and true religion could meet with heartier consent. Both have, and both should claim, an interest in it. The first chapter of the Bible is also the opening page of the book of science, and records her first veritable triumph; nor, if only this first page be rightly read, has she done much more than confirm and expand it.

(5) How, then, may we reach or recover the right point of view? In many ways, no doubt, if we only bring an honest and open mind to the task; but none seems more valuable than

that suggested by the brief phrase in Gen. i. 21, "And God created great whales;" for in these words we may find a key to the whole story of creation as narrated in the Book of Genesis. We approach this key as we observe that "great whales"—literally, "sea monsters," and doubtless alligators and crocodiles rather than whales would be in the author's mind—are the only creatures of whom specific mention is made in this Chapter, and consider the motive for mentioning them. It speaks indeed of domestic cattle and of wild beasts, but not of the lion or the ox; it speaks of the fowl of the air, and of the creeping things of the earth, but no one species of these genera is singled out for special note. It is only when we come to the fish of the sea, which the waters bring forth abundantly, that the creation of any single species is recorded, and a word is used which would call up in the minds of the first readers of this document an image of the monsters they

had seen disporting themselves in the Nile. Now, why is that? No naturalist, no man of science, intent on purely scientific objects, would have written thus, or have made this solitary exception. No; and therefore in this exception we have a hint that the whole document was written not from a purely scientific or naturalistic but from a religious point of view. For the crocodile—regarded as a noble animal type, a fine symbol of Nature's work—was *worshipped* in Egypt. The Israelites had grown familiar with that worship in the house of their bondage, and were only too prone to revert to it, as their after history proves. By a single stroke of his pen, then, either Moses or the original author of the document, teaches them that the crocodile was not a god but a creature of God, and condemns the whole system of idolatry, of animal or nature worship, by which the world was then oppressed. Following up the phrase to its last resort, we

find in it an attempt to free the minds of men from a more cruel bondage than that of Egypt, bondage to the mere brute forces of nature, and to raise them to their true place as lords of the natural world, and not its slaves.

(6) Nor is this the only hint contained in this Chapter of the religious intention by which it was inspired and shaped. It is full of such hints. Much easy satire has been expended, for example, on the Mosaic view of the function of sun, moon, and stars. According to Moses, we are told, the vast solar and sidereal systems have no other use than to give light to men, or to serve them "for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years." But, it is asked, can any rational mind believe that that vast array of bodies celestial was designed solely for the benefit of our tiny planet, or of the creatures who inhabit it?

Those who criticize Moses should at least, however, take the pains to place themselves

at his point of view. And as it is very obvious that no reasonable and thoughtful man, writing from the purely scientific or astronomical point of view, could possibly imagine that sun, moon, and stars were created solely for earthly uses, and as moreover we have quite as good ground for attributing the "godlike faculty" to this great statesman and lawgiver as to any of his critics, would it not be reasonable, as well as charitable, to inquire both whether Moses does affirm them to have no other use, and whether in emphasizing this special use he may not have had other than a scientific motive? In Chaldea, the ancestral home of the sons of Abraham, the great lights of heaven were worshipped as themselves divine, and this lustrous celestial veil was drawn over the face of the Almighty and hid Him from his seeking children. May not Moses then have written from a religious, instead of a scientific, point of view? May he not have made this emphatic and repeated

assertion of the creation of sun, moon, and stars, and of their ministry to man, in order to withdraw the intercepting veil, in order to teach us that we should worship none other god than the Father of the lights, and to persuade us that even the glorious orbs of heaven, to which men once paid divine honours, are our servants and ministers, not our lords?

If we but think ourselves back into the time and place of Moses, remember that he was the redeemer and mediator of Israel, that it was his special mission to reveal God and his will to them, and to lift them out of the ignorance and bondage in which all races were then sunk; and then, with all this well in mind, turn to his story of the creation, we shall find in it a hundred proofs that it *was* written from the religious, and not from the scientific, point of view; and that, in writing or in copying and adapting it to his purpose, he was impelled by the very motive which animated him throughout

his career ; viz. the desire to raise Israel, from its bondage to sense and nature, into the freedom and dignity proper to man and into the service and worship of the only true God.

(7) In insisting on this higher and religious motive, however, I do not for a moment admit that, even from a scientific point of view, much can be reasonably alleged against it, provided always that we read it with the same fairness which we are expected and bound to bring to the perusal of any scientific or sceptical treatise. It is a very ancient document that lies before us ; probably long anterior, in substance at least, to the time of Moses, though he may have recast it into its present shape. It is far and away the oldest document in the world. And we might fairly claim for it, therefore, that it should be read with the large allowance which is readily extended to almost every ancient document outside the covers of the Bible. It was primarily intended, moreover, for the instruction

of men to whom both science and letters were unknown. Hence it must of necessity be couched in simple memorable text free from technical formulæ, couched in such plain terms as plain men use. The very utmost we could demand of it is that it should contain no demonstrable and fatal error; that it should be pliant so as to leave room for the discoveries of widening science and experience; and that, to the end of time, it should fulfil some high moral or religious function. How happily it meets, how generously it outruns, these conditions has been demonstrated again and again, and is now very widely admitted, admitted the more frankly and heartily in proportion as its critics possess the erudition which enables them to compare it with the other ancient documents that cover, or profess to cover, the same ground. Those who possess even the slightest acquaintance with the cosmogonies and mythologies of ancient India, Egypt, Chaldea, Greece even, cannot but

confess that the story of the creation told by Moses is simplicity and sobriety itself when compared with *them;* that it is not bound up, as they are, with monstrous and impossible misreadings both of the natural universe and of the genesis of man; and that its terms are so simple, so general, so flexible as to leave verge for any conclusions which science may reach.

The "days" of creation have, indeed, been gravely denounced or lightly ridiculed from the time when men began to let their reason play freely on Scriptures which were long held to be sacred from criticism. But many very competent critics now see in this "week of days" only a mnemonic device which made it easier to commit the story to memory and to hand it down in an unbroken tradition; while they admit that the general order of creation, or of evolution, given by Moses tallies, at least in its main outlines, with the last hypotheses of science. And of this we may be very sure, that if the

document recorded in the first chapter of Genesis had been discovered among the papyri of Egypt or the inscriptions of Babylon, or even if its substance had been traced in the discourses of a Greek philosopher or the verses of a Latin poet, the whole scientific and literary world, even that small portion of it which girds at the Bible, would have received it with an instant chorus of admiration and astonishment; while if the "origins of things" which we find in the sacred books of Asia, Africa, or Europe, had been found between the covers of the Bible, even the staunchest believer must have repudiated them, and, with them, the whole system with which they were indissolubly intertwined.

(8) From the purely scientific point of view the Mosaic account of the creation is no doubt very defective, though it cannot fairly be said to be inaccurate. But, as we have seen, it does not profess to have been written from that point of view; and we need claim for it nothing more

than that it is the best conception of the genesis of the universe which the world's "grey fathers" were able to form or to receive. In such terms as they could apprehend, the ancestral race of man was taught that the world and all that it contains came from God, that it was fashioned by his wisdom, in a gradual orderly way, for a definite and gracious end. It is philosophic rather than scientific; *i.e.* it rather expresses man's first and best thoughts concerning first causes and their first effects than lays out in order a scientific report of the origin of all things. And why should we demand science of Moses? No one expects to find in the Ten Commandments a systematic code of laws, an elaborate and complete scheme of jurisprudence. Why, then, should we expect to find modern science in the first chapter of Genesis any more than we expect to find modern jurisprudence in the Decalogue? All just legislation indeed implies the fundamental moralities of the "Ten

Words"; and so all science, truly so called, implies the fundamental simplicities of the opening document of Genesis. But to look for a scientific treatise in Genesis is about as wise as to look for an elaborate jurisprudence in Exodus.

Nevertheless, when science has grown ripe, it may be that its last, simplest, and grandest generalizations will correspond, in a quite surprising way, with the ancient and simple generalities of the Book of Genesis. And we may, perhaps, find one hint of this correspondence in the recent discoveries of the spectroscope. It has been demonstrated that the very salts and metals which we find in the earth exist in the solar and sidereal light; so that possibly light may have in itself the constituent and originative germs of all terrestrial things, and, in the most exact scientific sense, the universe may be but a product, an incarnation and epiphany, of light. But should that be so, will not this

generalization of science correspond very happily with the words of Moses, who tells us that, in his first creative fiat, God said, "Let there be light," creating first that from which, ex hypothesi, all else was to proceed?

Time was too, we may add in passing, when the existence of light, prior to the creation of sun, moon, and stars, was a theme for ridicule; but now that, in their study of the nebulæ, astronomers have discerned the existence of "a self-luminous substance, of an inconceivable tenuity, diffused over spaces so vast as to baffle every effort to define them," men of science proclaim as a fact that which they once ridiculed as absurd.

(9) But it is when we look at the Mosaic narrative as a whole that we see most clearly what room it leaves for the advancing discoveries of science, and how evidently it was cast into a portable and rememberable form. We are told at the outset that the earth was

"without form and void." It needed, therefore, first to be put into form, and then fitted or furnished. These two processes constituted the work of the six "days." These six days are divisible into two groups—a first three, and a second three. In the first three God gives form to the formless earth; in the second three He fills the void earth with an innumerable multitude of living things. That which is without form is without use; that which is void is not being used. God will not suffer the world to be either useless or unused. Only when it is drawn into shape and peopled with innumerable forms of life can He take delight in it. Hence God says of each day's work, "It is good"; but only when the end crowns the work, and the world is both formed and occupied, does He pronounce it "very good."

What are the steps or stages of this work? First, light springs up in darkness; second, the aerial heavens are divided from the waters;

third, the earth emerges from the deep, and brings forth grass and herb; fourth, the great lights are made to rule the day and to rule the night; fifth, the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air are called into being; sixth, the beasts of the earth are formed, and man, the crown and lord of them all. This is the work of the six days; and these days, as I have said, may be divided into two groups; a first three in which God *forms* the formless earth, and a second three in which He *fills* the empty earth.

Look, then, at the first group, the formative group. In these, we are told, God separates the light from the darkness; then He separates the aerial heaven from the heaving waters; and then He separates the earth from the sea, and causes it to bring forth and bud. Thus, by successive acts of separation, the world is drawn into form, drawn within bounds that define it; the chaos is dissolved into its separate ele-

ments,* fire (light), air, water, earth. And these four are evoked in the most philosophic order; *i.e.* from the finest and most subtle to the grossest and coarsest. There is first the light, which is the finest; then there is the air, the next in fineness; then there is the water, which is grosser, but still finer than the earth; then there is the earth itself, the grossest of them all. Nay, more, these elemental acts of creation culminate in vegetation, which embraces all four of them. Its substance is of the earth earthy; its tissues are filled with water; its lungs breathe in and breathe out air; and the light, or heavenly fire, permeates its whole being, giving it both its beauty and its fruitfulness.

And now let us take the second group of days, and mark how exactly it corresponds to the other; how the fourth day answers to the

* Of course I use this word throughout in its popular, not in its scientific sense.

first, the fifth to the second, the sixth to the third. On the first day we have the genesis of light out of darkness; and on the fourth day the sun, the lord of light, is made, as are also those pure and sacred princes of darkness, the moon and the stars. On the second day the aerial firmament divides the upper from the inferior waters; and on the fifth the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are created and made. On the third day the solid earth is formed; and on the sixth day the earth brings forth beast and cattle and creeping thing, each after its kind. Nay, as the work of the first three days, during which the elements were created, culminated in vegetation which combines all the elements in itself, so the work of the second three days, during which the living creatures were called into being, culminated in man, who combines in himself all the special faculties and virtues of the animate world.

Obviously there is method here, there is design. And the design of the method is not only to help the memory and ensure an accurate tradition, but also to convey the thought that God put forth his creative powers according to a wise and divine order; first, creating the elements, from the finer and more subtle down to the grosser; and then furnishing the elements with animated forms of life, from the simpler and ruder to the more complex and perfect.

Men of science have laid so much stress on "the days" of this ancient narrative, that they have overlooked the wisdom and simplicity with which it conveys true and large impressions of the origin of all things. If, in a large simple way, speaking to the simple and unlettered on the genesis of the world, we were to speak thus: First, God gave shape to the shapeless earth, then He filled the empty earth; first He created the elements, beginning with the most subtle and creative, and coming down to

the most gross and material; then He filled the elements with their appropriate tenants, beginning now at the lowest end of the scale and working upward from the most simple and rudimentary structures to the most subtle, complex, perfect: if *that* were our story of the creation, as it is that of Moses, would any scientific man who believes in God the Maker have much fault to find with it? Would he not admit that, viewed as a large and simple outline, it was true enough for all practical purposes, and that it would be far more likely to convey a fine moral impression to the popular mind than a more detailed statement, such as the science of to-day might put forth, only to be corrected, if not contradicted, by the science of a hundred, a thousand, or four or six thousand, years hence?*

* In this ninth section I have been much indebted to some imperfect notes I took of a most admirable and comprehensive sermon preached by the late T. T. Lynch, some five and twenty years since.

(10) The prime excellence of this Biblical document is not, however, its simplicity, nor its elasticity—giving scope to any discoveries that science may make, nor even its general accuracy when read historically and in a reasonable spirit; but its religious inspiration and motive. It sees, and teaches us to see, *God* in all things. It puts Him behind and before all things. And, moreover, it places all things under *our* feet, so redeeming us from that fear of the vast and irresistible forces of nature which led unemancipated man to worship and appease them, and teaching us to worship Him only who is the Maker and Ruler of them all. They are our ministers and subordinates, not our lords; we have no Lord but Him. In short, the Chapter contains the very charter of science, as well as the fundamental truth of religion. For so long as men *worshipped* nature, they could not approach and study her in a scientific spirit, any more than they could

worship Him who is a Spirit so long as He was veiled from them by the works of his hands.

Nor, in thus tracing all things to a spiritual origin, does Moses do more than science itself will warrant; for science has no simpler hypothesis to offer us, nor any half so reasonable; nay, by the lips of some of her most distinguished disciples, she frankly refuses to supply us with any hypothesis at all. Searching everywhere for the original cause of things, she is compelled to confess that she cannot find it in the things themselves; that, while the method or order of physical sequences is familiar to her, their cause is unknown. The origin of matter, the origin of force, the origin of life, the origin of thought are all, by her own confession, beyond her reach. Even though she call Evolution to her aid, the problem is only pushed further back. It is not solved. It is no whit nearer to a solution. It has

to be handed over to reason and conscience after all.

And when we bend reason to the task of judging the solution of this standing problem which the Bible offers to our faith, reason confirms, and rejoices to confirm, the Biblical theory of causation. For we ourselves, if we have bodies, are spirits; and therefore the conception of a Spiritual Cause of all that we behold cannot be alien to us. If it be, as it is, an elementary axiom of science that the effect can contain nothing which was not in its cause, and can never be greater than its cause, then, as it is very certain that we find "spirit" in the great effect which we call the universe—find it at least in ourselves and in one another—we are plainly entitled to infer that there must be spirit in the Cause of this great effect. We hold, and are warranted in holding, that we must have derived our spirits from the original and creative Spirit; and that He must

be inconceivably greater than we are, since we and all things proceed from Him. Moreover, as we know that our spirits, our wills, rule and control our physical frame, and even pass out beyond our personal limits to affect and transform the face of the earth, we argue, not without some show of logic surely, that the great original Spirit must be able to rule and affect at his will the great and universal frame which sprang into being at his command.

(11) Even when we go away from and beyond ourselves, and watch the play and movement of the physical world, seeking to interpret it honestly and according to our best skill, we still meet with phenomena which speak to us of a Spirit behind it and working up through it; in other words, we see nature herself straining up to God. For who can watch the face of nature, and study her history, without observing in every province of her domain the signs of an all-pervading intelligence, and struggles

by which she seeks to free herself from the rigour of physical law, and to rise into a liberty which is the proper attribute of spirit? Matter itself is not purely materialistic, but is ever lifting itself up toward the spiritual, as it could hardly do were its Cause as material as itself. If in its lower provinces, for example, it is everywhere and absolutely subject to the law of gravitation, yet even in that low stage in which we come on the phenomena of crystallization, we observe a tendency to resent and shake off that subjection and to rise into forms and shape itself after an ideal impossible to it so long as it maintains an undivided obedience to this law; forms which by naming them "ideal" we shew to have in them the suggestion of a Mind at work behind the material atoms. Vegetable life marks another advance; for here so many forces operate, and the result is so complex, subtle, and wonderful, that we cannot but feel that at this point we

enter on a much higher and freer mode of existence, and are brought into more immediate contact with a shaping and invisible Cause. Science may dissect the plant, name its parts, determine their functions; but it cannot create the tiniest moss that grows upon a rock, or tell us by what mystic forces it was created, or from whence those forces issued. In animal life we make yet another advance, a nearer approach to the intelligence, will, freedom, which are the proper attributes, not of matter, but of spirit. We reach the full diapason in man, finding in him a creature subject to natural laws and instincts indeed, but capable of controlling and modifying them in a thousand different ways; able to subdue the earth, to bend all other creatures to his will, to study and formulate the laws by which the universe is governed, to rule his physical instincts and lusts in the service of reason and conscience, to deny himself and his natural selfishness that

he may minister to others; and, in a word, a creature capable of rising out of the necessities of mere physical law by obeying what St. James calls "the law of liberty" because it can only be freely obeyed.

Here, then—whether by evolution or any other process matters not a jot—we not only find spirit in man and confess it to be his supreme endowment, we also see that nature itself is so ordered and conditioned that it is for ever mounting to higher forms and freer modes of existence; and that, in its advance toward this spiritual heritage of freedom, it is for ever suggesting an Intelligence, a Will, at work behind it, which is seeking to raise and redeem it into the liberty for which it yearns. If the effect cannot be greater than its cause, must not the Creator of the universe and the Maker of man be a Spirit? Has not Moses reason with him when he writes *God, God, God* across the heavens and over the whole earth? If

science be a reasonable interpretation of the facts of nature, must not science herself confess, as she watches this wondrous ascent from bondage to freedom, from blank and blind subjection to intelligent and voluntary obedience, that a free intelligent Spirit is at work through the whole round of nature, and that its only adequate cause must be sought in God?

(12) But if we concede so much as this, can we refuse to concede far more? Whether or not Evolution be the last word and the master word of science, *we* are not bound to determine. Some of her eminent disciples affirm that the evolutionary theory has been logically demonstrated; while others, equally eminent, contend that as yet it is no more than a probable hypothesis. It is a question which they must be left to determine for themselves; though, however they may determine it, we shall continue to hold that the final word is far from having been pronounced, and expect to witness

triumphs of scientific discovery in the future at least equal to its victories in the past. But that, however it may be named, there has been a long process of development in nature, a gradual ascent from lower to higher forms of life, and that this ascent culminates in man, no one denies or can reasonably deny. Why, then, should this process, which has occupied not only the centuries of human history, but also the long æons of the geological record, stop abruptly at the point which it has now reached? Is it not far more rational to believe that the process is still going on, the ascent still culminating, the ladder still rising, however slowly and imperceptibly, and that in future ages and æons both man and nature will continue to develop into a perfection we cannot as yet conceive? But if that process is to go on, who does not perceive that as hitherto the whole realm of nature has been pressing on and upward to produce the spirit of man, as in

that spirit we have the highest consummation it has yet touched, so in that spirit we must look for the starting-point of the new development? Here, in spirit, is the topmost point nature has reached; if it is to rise higher still, must it not start from this point? Must not that which is *spiritual* in nature unfold new energies, pervade and dominate that which is material more fully, and perchance transform it at last into its own quality and substance? May not that great word of the Apostle, "first that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual," be truer after all than any hypothesis which science has formulated, or any generalization which philosophy has framed?

(13) The method by which this development or advance has been effected is, we are told, that of differentiation and individualization; which means, I suppose, that when by some happy conjunction of outward conditions with inward organization a certain member of any

species grows to be different from and to excel its fellows, this happy variation, this favoured individual of the species, becomes the source from which a new species springs, the type to which it conforms. The line of advance runs through these selected and favoured organisms. For years, perhaps for ages, a lower type of life has waited for the happy moment in which its most perfect and richly endowed form should appear; and then, when it appears, this perfected form constitutes a new point of departure, and the process of development starts on its upward way once more.

If, then, when nature has risen into man, that process is still to go on, and to go on by this same method of differentiation, for what should we look? We should look, not for any abrupt rise in the whole level of human life, but for the selection of favoured individual forms, *i.e.* for elect men, who shall be raised by some happy conspiracy of outward conditions and

inward organization above the common level, into higher and ever higher forms of life, until at last the one Supreme Man is born in whom the whole laborious ascent is consummated, and from whom there may spring men of a higher species, of a type answering to his own.

This is what science herself teaches us to expect as we follow "the struggle of existence from dim nebulous beginnings" to ordered worlds, and from the lower forms of animate life up to the dawn of consciousness and the rich personal life of man. And what science has taught us to expect is precisely that which the Bible declares the great creative and redeeming Spirit to have done. For what, after all, is the story which the Bible has to tell but this; that when the common plane of humanity had been reached, by a process of natural selection Abraham and his seed were differentiated from their fellows, elected to special favour, raised to a higher type, set apart to be

a peculiar people of happier spiritual conditions than the other races of mankind; that from this selected and highly favoured stem, illustrated all along by the noblest types of human life, there broke at last the peerless and consummate flower of humanity, a Man so perfect as to present a new and higher type of manhood; and that from Him, the perfect Son of Man, there has sprung and is ever springing a new and higher order of men, spiritual rather than natural men, born from above as well as from below, one with Him already, but ever—on both sides of the gate of death—pressing on to a closer likeness, a fuller participation of his Divine life; so that the very Apostle who declared the divine order to be "first that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual," also affirms the first man to have been of the earth earthy, while the second man is the Lord from heaven?

In fine, Science and the Bible are at one

and will be seen to be at one whenever scientific men learn to treat the Bible fairly, and religious men learn to deal fairly with the discoveries of Science. They both proclaim a spiritual Cause of the world, and a spiritual End for it. They both affirm that nature is from Spirit, by Spirit, for Spirit. They both teach that as all things come from God, so also things tend to God and will reach their true goal and perfection as they return to and rest in Him, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE PROBLEM STATED.

(14) AFTER the unfounded assumption that the Bible affirms a genesis of the world which is demonstrably unscientific, there is no point on which modern sceptics lay more stress than the undoubted fact, that the Bible records signs and wonders which imply a power above nature, if not against it. Perhaps the objection would be more accurately stated were they to say, that the miracles of the Bible imply the activity, in nature, of a Power of which our modern scientific interpretation of nature finds no trace. But, state the objection how we may, it is a formidable one, and has done much to unsettle

the faith both of those who still believe, and of those who once believed, the Bible to be or to contain the word of God.

Now so long as the Church conceived of miracles as violations of the laws of nature, it was very natural, and even reasonable, that sceptics should declare miracles to be impossible: for how should God transgress his own laws? or how can any purely physical law be broken? But now that the Church conceives of miracles as modifications of the ordinary course of nature, induced by the coming in of a higher force acting on a higher law, sceptics no longer pronounce miracles to be impossible indeed, but they still declare them to be incredible. How can they pronounce them impossible when even they themselves possess and wield a power by which the ordinary course of nature is constantly modified and overruled? When, to use a familiar illustration, I fling a stone into the air, I do not violate the law of gravita-

tion ; I simply modify, and to a certain extent override, its action by bringing a new force into play, that of my own will. The intelligence and will of man have changed the face of the whole earth. By hewing down forests, by ploughing and draining fields, by laying down roads and railroads, by building houses, cities, dykes, harbours, ships, we have not only modified the surface of land and sea, we have also invaded the kingdom of the air, and changed the very climates on which, in large measure, the life of nature depends. There is not a single square inch in England, probably there is not a square inch in the whole world, which is to-day what it would have been had it been left to the free play of purely natural forces. But if the will of man has so largely modified the action of these forces, who can doubt that the will of God might, should He, for some worthy end, think fit, modify it much more widely, subtly, and potently ?

(15) "No," says the modern sceptic, "miracles are not impossible, if by miracle you mean simply a modification of the natural order by the introduction of a supernatural force, and if I admit that any such supernatural force exists. But though they are not impossible, they are incredible; for no adequate reason for them has ever been adduced, nor have they been submitted to the scientific tests by which alone they could be verified."

And if in our turn we ask: How, then, do you account for the fact that in a Book, confessedly the greatest and noblest in the literature of the world, and by men who seem to be very honest and competent witnesses, miracles are constantly affirmed, and are so blended with both the theology and the morality they taught —their theology, moreover, being the highest, and their morality the purest the world has ever seen—that the one cannot be disentangled from the other? The sceptic replies: "The

miracles of the Bible can and must be disentangled from its teaching. They are late and legendary additions to it. They are of the nature of those myths which we find in the earlier stages of the history of every race, the fabulous inventions with which every race glorifies its own origin, its own founders and heroes. The growth of such myths implies no insincerity; the allegation is not that they are wittingly or wilfully fabricated. Great teachers, warriors, rulers, benefactors, naturally live on in the memory and affection of their fellows long after they are dead. Their achievements are exaggerated, their character exalted, first by affection, then by tradition, till they grow to be of more than mortal stature; a halo gathers round their brows, and they are worshipped as gods, or at least as sons of the gods, while the far-resounding echoes of the great deeds they really did swell into monstrous and fabulous proportions."

And such a reply does not, at the first blush, seem to be unreasonable. It falls in with many vague notions which are floating in our minds, and comes to us with all the added strength which these vague notions lend it. It is only when we bring it to the Bible, and try to read the Bible in its light, that we discover how utterly this plausible hypothesis breaks down. For there we find both that the miracles of the Bible cannot possibly be disentangled from its teaching, and that these miracles bear no single trace, mark, or note of the legendary growth or mythical invention to which they are ascribed.

(16) That the miracles of the Bible cannot be detached from its theology and morality has been proved again and again, and proved most conclusively; for the sceptical argument has been broken down not at its weakest, but at its strongest, point. How often of late years, for example, and from how many quarters, have

we been admonished to drop the supernatural and even the theological element in the Gospels, and to content ourselves with the pure, sweet, and lofty morality of the Sermon on the Mount; on which Sermon those whom we call sceptics have lavished eulogies so nobly conceived and so eloquently expressed that it would be hard to match them from the writings of apologists and divines. But if for a moment we accept their advice and confine ourselves to the Sermon which, for them, sums up all that is most valuable in the Gospel of Christ, do we thereby exclude either theology or miracles from our field of view? On the contrary, not only do we find in this Sermon a doctrine of God, a doctrine of the Holy Ghost, a doctrine of Providence, a doctrine of Sin and of the Forgiveness of Sins, a doctrine of Prayer, and a doctrine of Heaven, but we also find that the motives to which its pure and lofty morality appeals are purely theological motives. We are to do

good, hoping for nothing in return; we are to give alms without advertising them; we are to love all men, even our enemies; we are to requite good for evil and give a blessing for a curse;—not from any merely ethical motive, but from purely religious motives, that we may please our Father who seeth in secret, that we may prove ourselves to be his children, that we may become perfect even as He is perfect. We are not to be careful, because our Father careth for us; we are to forgive, because He has forgiven us; we are to ask for what we want, because our Father knows how to give us his good gifts; and we are not to be importunate in our prayers, because our Father knoweth what we have need of before we ask Him. In short, the whole round of motives in this Sermon is purely theological.*

But *the motives* of any ethical system are its essence; they mould its character, they deter-

* Cf. "The Foundations of Faith," by Rev. Henry Wace, D.D.

mine its quality. How, then, can we detach the theology of the Sermon on the Mount from its morality when, to do that, would be simply to detach the motive from its every precept, to rob it of its essence, and so to destroy its very existence?

And as for detaching miracles from this Sermon, that is wholly impossible, except at the cost of vitally impairing its integrity. For not only does it imply a supernatural element throughout, but in the verses in which it culminates—verses than which none are more dear to the sceptic and the moralist, if only because they rebuke the hypocrisy of the Church—our Lord represents some of his followers as claiming to have wrought miracles, nay, as having really cast out devils in his name, and in his name done many wonderful works; and as, nevertheless, being rejected by Him because they had not cast the devil out of their own heart, but had been workers of iniquity as well as workers

of miracles. And yet how should He have spoken of them as working miracles, and working them in his name, if He himself did no miracle? How should his mere Name have been so potent if He Himself exercised no supernatural power?

No, we can no more detach miracles than we can detach theology from the Sermon on the Mount. And if miracles, theology, and morality are inextricably blended in the very Sermon which the opponents of theology and miracles have selected as their battle-field, and which they so love and admire that they would fain reduce the whole teaching of Christ to the limits of this single discourse, we may be sure that in the other sections and books of the Bible miracles and teaching are still more obviously, if not still more intimately, intertwined.

(17) That the miracles of the Bible present none of the well-known notes or marks which characterize the myths of other ancient scrip-

tures or traditions becomes apparent as soon as we study them, and especially as we observe the manner in which they are distributed through its pages. These marks are so well known, so generally admitted, that I need only enumerate them.

Myths, then, belong to the earlier reaches of human history, and tend to disappear as we come down the stream of time.

Myths tend to glorify a race or the origin of a race, and the great men who have illustrated and adorned it.

Myths take time to grow; if no man is a hero to his own valet, so also no hero or prophet is exalted to divine honours by his own generation or in his own age and land.

I do not pause to argue these points. They are admitted axioms. But if we apply these axioms to the Bible story, fairly yet firmly, we are likely to be at once surprised and edified by the result.

(18) The first fact likely to strike a student of the Bible who seeks to acquaint himself with the story it tells is that, whereas in all other literatures myths abound in the earlier stages of history and gradually disappear as that history comes into clearer light, in the Bible we absolutely have no record of a single miracle, a single indubitable modification of natural laws by a supernatural power, for the first twenty-five centuries of the space it covers! Creation is of necessity miraculous on any theory of it, and hence no candid reader will affect surprise at finding certain marvellous displays of supernatural energy in the document which records the creation of the world and of man. But if, as we are bound to do, we refuse to reckon as a miracle any event, however marvellous, which can be fairly attributed to natural or secondary causes—as, for example, the Deluge or the destruction of the Cities of the Plain—we are met by this most remarkable fact, that from the creation of the

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world down to the call of Moses, a period of two thousand five hundred years, the laws of nature hold on the even tenour of their way, unbroken by a single interruption, although these twenty-five centuries, since they are the earliest in the human story, ought, according to the mythical hypothesis, to be the richest in tales of wonder. Abraham wrought no miracle, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, though these three patriarchs were the venerated fathers and founders of the Hebrew race, never forgotten in after years, never mentioned but with honour and pride; and although it is precisely the founders of a race with whom tradition and mythical invention are most busy, and round whose heads a legendary halo most naturally gathers.

With the call of Moses, indeed, the first miraculous epoch opens; there commences an extraordinary outburst of supernatural force; and so long as the sacred historian is narrating the exodus from Egypt, the wanderings in the

Wilderness, and the entrance into the Promised Land, signs and wonders meet us almost on every page. Here, then, the mythical theory may seem to win an easy triumph; for, confessedly, the origin of a race is apt to be glorified by legends which will not bear a critical examination. But this apparent triumph is turned into utter defeat the moment we mark that the miracles which attended the commencement of the national life do *not* glorify either Moses or the men whom he redeemed from their bondage and welded into a nation. So far as they were vouchsafed to Moses personally, they came, as we shall see, to compel him to an errand on which he was unwilling to go; so far as they were wrought by Moses for the people, they were wrought in vain, and were the reproach of the nation rather than its glory.

The first two miracles in his personal record are those of the staff turned into a serpent and of the hand smitten with leprosy. Have these

miracles, both of which attended his call to the service of God and of Israel, the look of myths invented by fond tradition to do him honour? What they really illustrate is his weakness, not his strength, his well-nigh invincible obstinacy and unbelief. It was because he would not go on the errand on which he was sent, because he could not be persuaded that he was competent for the task to which he was called, that these marvels were wrought. Even when they had been wrought, the historian tells us that he persisted in his obstinate reluctance and unbelief, until the anger of God was kindled against him. Is that in the tone of one who was inventing a mythic halo for the head of the Redeemer and Lawgiver of Israel, and who wanted to make him glorious in our eyes?

In like manner the miracles of the Wilderness, almost without exception, tell to the shame, not to the honour, of the men who, in the language of one of their own poets, there saw God, tempted

Him, and proved his work. Forty years long was He grieved with them and provoked, working miracles only to still their murmurs, to quench their mutinies, to repair their mistakes, to rebuke their sins. Is it so much as conceivable that miracles such as these were invented by the poets of Israel in order to glorify their origin, to give dignity and heroic splendour to the men from whom they sprang? Or were they so clumsy that, intending to lift their fathers to heaven, they unwittingly cast them down into this hell of opprobrium, folly, obstinacy, and flat rebellion against the Hand which fed and guided them? That, surely, is a curious example of the patriotic legend which, instead of setting forth the fathers and founders of a race as heroes and half divine, stigmatizes them as such incurable and stiff-necked sinners that the whole generation of them perished by and for their crimes in the Wilderness!

No sooner were the Jews led through the

Wilderness and established in the Holy Land by Moses, and Joshua his minister and successor, than the display of miraculous power begins to decline, and for a period of six centuries we meet with only a dubious miracle here and there. In the long picture gallery of Holy Writ, no men have a more legendary look than the border chieftains who rose to be Judges in Israel. The age of the Judges is confessedly the heroic age of the Hebrew chronicles; and heroes are the very men round whose memories marvels, legends, fabulous exploits, most naturally collect. The Judges were succeeded by the Kings; and for whom should tradition weave its mythical wreaths, or exhale its bright magnifying mists, if not for Saul the warrior, for David the poet and darling of Israel, and for Solomon its sage? In these three we have the very style of man that attracts legends to himself as by a natural law—as indeed they *have* attracted them in chronicles less sober

than those of the Bible. And yet in the era of the Judges only a few miracles are found, while in that of the earlier and nobler Kings they are altogether wanting.

It may be said, however, "Miracles are not to be looked for in an age so enlightened as that of David and Solomon, when the Hebrews were brought into contact with other races and higher civilizations than their own; an age of commerce, literature, art, in which knowledge grew from more to more." How, then, are we to account for the fact that, two centuries later, we come on another extraordinary manifestation of the miraculous energy? Samuel founded the schools of the prophets indeed; but Elijah and Elisha seem to have been the men who first made prophecy a real and great power in Israel, who brought its broader theology and loftier moral ideal to bear on the national conscience. And with the advent of Prophecy to power there came a whole series

of miracles as marvellous as any of which we read in the earlier and darker ages. At a period so late, and in a light so clear as to leave little scope for legend, we find marvels as numerous as ever, and as wonderful. Nor have these later marvels any trace of mythical invention upon them. Some of them illustrate the Prophet's weakness rather than his strength, tend to his shame, not to his glory, as, for instance, the miracle by which Elijah was fed in the Wilderness, after he had prayed that he might die rather than be sent back to a task so lonely and so hopeless; while all of them tend to the shame, rather than to the glory, of the people of Israel, since they were wrought to recover them from their idolatries and sins to the service of God, and wrought, as the poets and chroniclers both confess, almost wholly in vain. Nor, again, is it to his miracles that Elijah owes his grandeur and the large heroic proportions he assumes in our thoughts, but

to his character, to his indomitable courage, his passionate loyalty and devotion; just as Elisha stands in our imaginations as the type of all that is sweet, genial, gracious, in the man of God, not because he did many mighty works, but because his works, like those of One greater than himself, were works of mercy and compassion.

Once more the glory declines as these two heroic figures pass from the scene, and the light of the miraculous Shechinah is involved in the cloud. And, now, we might well think the world was growing too old and too wise to babble of legends, and to delight itself in the wonders proper only to its childhood. Four centuries pass, illuminated only at scattered and distant points by the supernatural effulgence. The national existence of the Jews has come to an end. The land, once so populous and thriving, lies desolate. Of a people, once so mighty, only a few poor captives are left,

who sit and weep by the waters of Babylon. And here, of all places, at Babylon, fertilized by the waves of successive Eastern civilizations, among a people the most fierce, luxurious, and polished, the miraculous energy breaks forth once more, and Daniel and his compeers are so visibly guarded and taught by Heaven as to assure the dejected captives that God has not forgotten them, and to constrain the mighty Persian conqueror to unloose their chains and to send them back to the land of their fathers in peace. Yet even now this strange story tells against, rather than for, the people for whose redemption these marvels are wrought. Only an inconsiderable remnant of them respond to the heavenly call, and return to recommence their national life. Most of them reject the counsel of God against themselves, and fade out of history, absorbed by the races amongst whom their captivity has been spent; insomuch that the fate of ten

out of the twelve tribes remains, unto many, a problem to this day. Still, therefore, the miracles wear the same unmythical stamp. They are not legends which any race would have invented in its own honour. They proclaim its shame rather than its glory. For which of these later prophets did not the Jews reject or persecute? against which of these gifted and patriotic statesmen did they not rebel?

(19) In the minds of many readers this strange story, so far as it has yet gone, the story which the Bible tells of its own miracles, will, I imagine, awaken some surprise. For most of us have assumed that miracles are pretty evenly distributed through the pages of the Old Testament, and thus we have missed the obvious intention which goes far to vindicate and explain them. When we see that its miracles group themselves in three periods far removed from each other, and cluster round three events of

prime importance, viz. the inception of the national life, the advent of the Prophetic power, and the redemption from the Babylonian captivity, we begin to get glimpses of a certain Divine purpose, a certain Divine order and propriety in them. We feel that, if God so loved men as to reveal Himself and his will to them when they could not find Him out, and were perishing for lack of that knowledge in which eternal life consists, it was natural that He should elect one out of the various races of men, and so manifest Himself to them as to train and prepare them to receive, and to impart, a growing revelation of his will. At the very lowest we see that there was a certain economy, such as characterizes all Divine works, in this selection of one race to receive the supernatural disclosure which was intended for the benefit of all races; while in the fact that the miracles group themselves round the three critical points in the history of that elect race, we recognize

a new illustration of that same economy of Divine power. Supernatural interventions are not lavished in unnecessary and wasteful profusion. They come only at the call of need. There is a certain unity in them. They conspire together for one great and worthy end; they are meant to reveal God as the Father, Teacher, and Saviour of mankind. Even with this end in view, the laws of nature are not unnecessarily and perpetually modified. Only at long intervals, only to usher in some great birth of time, does the Creative Spirit look through the veil of secondary causes, only "at sundry times," and to meet some pressing necessity, does the light shine through the cloud in which it is ordinarily involved.

If, then, we listen, as we are bound to listen, to the story told by the Bible itself, and mark the law which governs the distribution of its miracles, the haze of difficulty which enshrouds them thins, in large measure it lifts and dis-

appears; and we can but confess that here, as everywhere else, God has revealed his will in a manner worthy of Himself.

(20) Even yet, however, the story is not fully told. The best is still to come.

Another wide interval, an interval of four centuries, is placed between the Restoration from the Captivity and the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ; and during these four hundred years no miracle is recorded, and even the voice of Prophecy is dumb. But when, "in the fulness of the times," the Son of Man appeared to redeem the world from a more dreadful captivity than that of Babylon and Egypt, and to complete the revelation of God as the Teacher and Saviour of mankind, it was but natural that the miraculous energy, which had emphasized each of its previous initiatory stages, should break forth and shine with a splendour beyond all precedent. If there was ever a moment in the history of man in which the Creative Spirit

might be expected to disclose Himself in works natural to Him but supernatural to us, works in which that Divine force, his sovereign and almighty Will, should so modify the laws of nature and of human nature as to compel recognition, if not faith,—was not this such a moment? Whatever our private verdict, however, the Gospels steadily affirm that when the Son of Man, Himself the great miracle of time, manifested Himself to Israel, He wrought among them signs and wonders such as man had never witnessed before, and that He communicated this strange power to the men who "companied with him."

Now if we recall these familiar miracles, and ask ourselves whether they bear a single mark of a mythical or legendary origin, we cannot in candour deny that they are free from every trace of it, despite all the attempts of keen and erudite critics to fasten that colour upon them. Myths belong to the earlier stages of

history; but this was the last stage in the national history of the Jews. Myths tend to glorify a race, or the great men of a race; but the Jews rejected Him to whom these miracles are ascribed; and, so far from placing Him among their greatest, they hate and deny Him to this day as a traitor and an apostate who brought shame and disaster on the blood from which He sprang. Myths take time to grow; but the miracles attributed to the Son of Man were attributed to Him in his lifetime, and were recorded by his own cotemporaries.

We are told, indeed, that that age—late as it was, and albeit we have derived from it and the ages which immediately preceded it, all that is highest and best in the civilization of our own time—was a credulous age, in which legendary and marvellous achievements were freely ascribed to every personage who attained an heroic stature. But with what reason can we call that a credulous age in

which the mythologies and legends of the great Pagan superstition were all crumbling into dust, when the Epicurean philosophy took the very tone adopted by our modern materialists, and the Stoic anticipated the very maxims insisted on by our modern advocates of a rational morality uncomplicated by the dogmas of theology?

(21) If any man objects: "But we are speaking of *Jews*, not of Greeks and Romans; and surely the Jews of that time were credulous and prone to see miracles where no miracles were?" we need not insist, in reply, on a fact for which there is nevertheless much evidence, viz. that even the Jews were deeply infected in the time of Christ, and for two or three centuries before that time, with the sceptical philosophy of Greece and Rome. There is an answer to it so conclusive that, though it has often been adduced, it has never been met, nor am I aware of any attempt even to refute

it. For at this very age there lived a man who answered much more closely to the popular, and even to the Jewish, idea of a hero than Christ Jesus; a man, moreover, who made a far deeper impression on the imagination and memory of his fellows; and yet no miracle was ever attributed to him, whether in the Bible or out of it. John the Baptist was a Jew. The Jewish people recognized in him a prophet and more than a prophet. They would gladly have accepted him as the Christ. So profound was the impression he made that "all Jerusalem and all Judea went out after him;" so profound that Josephus, who dismisses Jesus with a single dubious sentence, has much to say of the character and mission of the stern unbending seer and moralist, who struck his cotemporaries rather as an embodied and inspired voice than as a man of like passions with themselves. And yet no legend has gathered round this strange impressive figure, no halo gleams on his

brow. Neither his own disciples nor the Jewish people, nor Josephus or any other writer of his time, credits him with the supernatural power so freely ascribed to Jesus, and even to the meanest of his followers. So marked was the contrast between John and Jesus, that even the outlandish folk of Peræa were struck with it, and exclaimed, "John did no miracle, but all that John said of this man is true." It is, therefore, to beg the whole question, it is to evade rather than meet the point in dispute, when certain critics ascribe the miracles of Jesus to the credulous and myth-making tendencies of the age in which He appeared, although the most prominent and popular Jewish prophet of that age stands before us untouched by any ray of miraculous glory. Till this fact has been explained, this problem solved, we are hardly called upon to adduce any other argument against those who would reduce the wonders attributed to Christ to the level of worn-out and incredible myths.

(22) Yet there is another argument of no small weight. For, in the case of Christ, myths had no time to grow. It is true that sceptical critics have attributed our four Gospels to the middle or end of the second century. But it is also true that they have been led to affix this late date to them mainly by a desire to discredit them, and to leave room for the fabrications of myths. And it is still further true that they are now beginning to confess, that the Gospels must have been written at a much earlier date than they once supposed. Into this long and difficult controversy, however, we need not enter. For here again we can appeal to a fact which has never been denied, never seriously questioned even. The most sceptical critics admit that four of St. Paul's Epistles—1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians—were written by the Apostle whose name they bear. But St. Paul was born, as they also admit, in about the same year as our Lord. He wrote

these Epistles within twenty or thirty years of the death on the cross. In these Epistles he ascribes miracles and miraculous powers to our Lord as clearly and emphatically as do any of the men who wrote the Gospels. He tells us that he had affirmed these miracles from the moment of his conversion; nay, that his own conversion was due to a miracle. Here, then, we have the testimony of one who was of the same generation with Christ—a testimony which leaves no time or scope for the invention of legends, for the growth of myths.

And what need we more? Are we to doubt St. Paul's testimony simply because he was a Christian? But he was not *always* a Christian. He had hated and persecuted Christ. What made him a Christian except that he could not resist the power which conquered even his stubborn and ardent antagonism? His conversion, fairly weighed, does but give new force to his evidence.

(23) At every point, therefore, the mythical hypothesis breaks down, although in some form this hypothesis is the only explanation of the Biblical miracles which the sceptical criticism of the day offers us. If we ask the Bible for its own account of its own miracles, it tells us that, instead of being common and constant, they are rare; that they come only at wide intervals, and to usher in some new and momentous epoch. It groups them round the commencement of the national and religious life of Israel, the advent of Prophecy to power, the redemption from the Captivity, and the coming of that great Prophet, like unto Moses, who was sent to give life to the whole world and to redeem all men from their bondage to vanity and corruption.

(24) Now, obviously, before we can attempt to *solve* the problem of miracles with any hope of success, we must *state* that problem: we must get the statement of the Bible itself. And

in addition to all we have yet learned from the Bible, as a corollary or inference from all that we have yet learned, the Bible affirms that the four miraculous epochs in the history of man mark four successive and ascending stages in God's revelation of Himself and of his will to the world. The need for such a revelation needs no proof. That man by searching cannot find out God, even in such poor "perfection" as is possible to man, is surely put beyond a doubt by the moral and religious confusion to which the world, after a search of so many centuries, was reduced at the advent of Christ. In proportion as any man is familiar with the moral and religious conditions of that age, he will admit, what Plato anticipated, that nothing short of a Divine self-revelation could have raised men from the shame and bondage of the pit into which they had fallen. And the affirmation of the Bible is that the revelation thus given in the person, teaching, and work of our

Lord Jesus Christ was one for which long and patient preparation was necessary, and had been made; that *one* race had to be, and had been trained century after century to receive and to disseminate it; that the miraculous epochs of which we have spoken were necessary parts of that training; that at each of these epochs a new and higher form of revelation was introduced; that miracles were necessary and were designed to compel attention to and illustrate the new stage, the loftier moral ideal, which had been reached, and to raise the chosen race from the lower stage which it had long occupied, and to which it had grown familiar and attached; and that in the fulness of times, when this training was complete—and, as it seems to us, long before it was complete—God sent forth his Son to make a final disclosure of his will, to fulfil and make good all which those who came before Him had promised and foreshadowed.

Now the true statement of any problem is an immense aid to the solution of it. And already, although as yet the statement of our problem is not complete, I think it must be admitted that it has grown simpler and easier to us; that there is a certain harmony and consistency in all that we have heard the Bible say of its own miracles which is very reassuring, and which does much to relieve the problem of the difficulties and improbabilities that our false or partial statements of it have attached to it. Does not the Bible, when duly examined, set forth a worthy and sufficient end for the miracles it records? Does it not set them forth in a natural and noble sequence? If miracles are possible, can such miracles as these be altogether incredible, at least to those who believe in God and in any revelation of his will?

(25) To complete our statement of the problem, it only needs that we briefly glance at the miracles which accompanied the final

or Christian stage of the Biblical revelation, and gather up what it has to say of the signs and wonders ascribed to our Lord.

Consider, then, *the quality* of the miracles attributed to Christ. So little legendary are they in form and substance, that even the most sceptical critics confess them to be the very perfection of sober good sense when once they are compared with the legends of the Hebrew writings not contained in the Bible, or with the marvels of any Pagan mythology which we are able to recover. Where, for example, do we meet in the Gospels with any "work" which even descends toward the level of the puerile fables which tell us how the boy Jesus breathed the breath of life into birds which He had moulded of clay, or that He gathered up in his "napkin" the water He had spilled from a broken jug?

Consider, again, how the miracles attributed to Him harmonize with all that the New

Testament affirms of his nature, his character, his teaching. If, as the Gospels steadfastly assert, He was Himself a miracle, what more natural than that He should work miracles? If He was God as well as man, must not He shew forth the God in Him as well as the man? If He was only what He meant when He called Himself "the Son of Man," if, that is, He was only the ideal Man, might He not naturally possess a greater power over the forces and laws of nature than we do, who yet are modifying those forces and laws by every breath we draw, and every action we perform? Might He not well rise to that absolute dominion over all the works of God's hands which the ancient seers claimed as the proper, though forfeited, heritage of man? Might not He whose will was invariably at one with the will of God, be *trusted* with a power which could not safely be confided to us while our wills are so weak and variable and prone to

stray from their rest? If, only, He was without sin, as many admit who pronounce his miracles incredible or deny his "proper deity," was not his very sinlessness the greatest of all miracles, supposing Him to have been a man of like passions with ourselves?

And how came He to speak as man never spake if He were not what man never was? Innumerable attempts have been made, indeed, to reduce the peerless Son of Man to the level of other great teachers of antiquity, attempts, however, which even the ablest and most fearless sceptics—*e.g.* Goethe, Carlyle, John Stuart Mill — have branded as utter and miserable failures: but if we would measure the distance between Him and them, we have only to compare the tone and bearing of Christ with those of Socrates, or Plato, or even St. Paul. In them we have ardent inquiry, lofty speculation, an earnest devotion to the best and highest aims of life, blended with a constant sense of

ignorance, failure, dependence, personal uncleanness; while in Him, and in Him alone, we find from the first a calm that never wavers, a wisdom that knows no bound, a holiness unconscious of a single spot, an authority unbroken by a doubt.

Consider, too, how his teaching was illustrated by his "works"; how, by opening the eyes of the blind, for example, He illustrated the saying, "I am the Light of the world"; how, by raising the dead, He proved Himself to be "the Resurrection and the Life"; how, in short, by healing the diseases of men and redeeming them from their distresses, He proclaimed Himself to be the Saviour of the world.

What would the Gospel be to us if there were no forgiveness of sins? But He who forgives sins modifies the action of great moral laws, by bringing a new moral force into play; and shall not He who can thus modify and override moral laws also modify and overrule

physical laws? Is it much that He who could say, "Thy sins are forgiven," should also say, "Take up thy bed and walk?"

Consider, once more, the *self-consistency* of the Gospel miracles, how they all move in one plane and work together for one end. The Incarnation might be incredible to us if it introduced an ordinary life; but the life of Christ is an extraordinary one; through its whole course it answers to the greatness of its beginning. The resurrection and ascension of Christ might be incredible if they closed an ordinary career; but as the close of *his* career on earth they seem simply natural and appropriate.

Glance at his miracles, moreover, in the light of his mission, of the work He is yet to do. According to the Scriptures of the New Testament, He is to raise all men from the dead, to judge or rule them all, to overcome evil with good, to redeem the very creation

from its bondage to vanity and corruption, to subdue all things unto Himself; and, finally, to hand over to his Father a perfected universe. But if that is to be the crown and consummation of his work, is it unreasonable to expect that He who by a stupendous miracle, which involves the modification of all laws both physical and moral, is to reform and reconstitute the universe, should give us some signs and foretastes of his power even from the first?

(26) Now we have no right to detach this miracle and that from the whole series of his mighty works, or from all else that the Bible tells us of Him, all that it tells us of his character, his teaching, his claims, his mission, and final triumph, and consider them apart. We cannot so much as see them truly save as we see them in their full and natural connections. The whole thing hangs together, and we are bound to deal with it as a whole. And if we

thus deal with it, the mere Biblical statement of the problem goes far toward solving it. For taking it thus, we see that the Bible groups its miracles round the great epochs in the religious history of the race, each of these epochs pointing to and preparing the way for the last, and all culminating in the advent and work of Christ. We see that the Bible claims for Him a nature and character of which miracles would be a natural outcome. We see that all his "works" are good works; that they illuminate the truths He came to teach; that they are consistent with each other, as well as with his character and teaching; and that they are also consistent both with the redeeming work He did on earth, and the yet greater work which He has promised to do from heaven. All the lines of the Divine action and revelation in the past concentrate in Him; all their lines in the future ray out from Him.

If we once accept this simple, but most won-

derful story, it is nothing to say that the miracles of the Bible bear no trace of mythical or legendary invention; it is nothing to say that no other or later "marvels" are worthy to be compared to them. We may go further and say that the miracles of Christ become *credible* to us by their utter consistency with all else that the Bible contains; that they commend themselves to us as natural and inevitable features of the great story it tells.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE PROBLEM SOLVED.

(27) NOW that the ground has been cleared, as I would fain hope, by a statement of the problem, drawn from the Bible itself, which refutes the mythical theory of Miracles, it may be possible for us to approach our problem with some prospect of arriving at a reasonable and adequate solution of it. Not that the way is quite clear even yet. For our opponents, driven from the mythical theory, fall back behind the battery of Hume, and contend that, if not impossible, miracles are so incredible, so opposed to the course of nature and the teachings of experience, as that *no* evidence can substantiate

them, however honest or strong it may be. It is natural that they should betake themselves to this defence, for no other is any longer open to them. The critical argument, the attempt to prove, *e.g.* the late origin of the Gospels, and so to leave room for the mythical theory to work, has quite failed; as indeed they themselves, by the mouth of their most eminent and eloquent representative (M. Renan, in his *Vie de Jésus*), have candidly confessed. Accordingly they fall back, as he falls back, on the assumption which led both Strauss and Baur to weave their exploded critical hypotheses, viz. that "what *could not* happen *did not* happen," and that miracles could not have happened because they are contrary to general experience;* or, to state the objection in their own words: "Miracles, or the intervention of Deity in human affairs, are, to

* This point is wrought out at length, and with masterly ability, by Dr. Wace, in *The Gospel and its Witnesses*, chap. i. and ii.

the scientific thinker, *à priori*, so improbable, that no amount of testimony suffices to make him entertain the hypothesis for an instant."

This is the argument, or assumption, which we now have to meet. And I know not how better to approach it than by considering the words of the Roman Centurion as reported by St. Matthew (chap. viii. 8, 9), and pursuing the line of thought which they suggest; for, approaching it thus, we shall arrive, I trust, at a solution of our problem which is both reasonable and adequate, while we also expose the fallacy of the last assumption of modern scepticism.*

(28) "This heathen soldier," says Luther, "turns theologian, and begins to dispute in as fair and Christian-like a manner as would suffice

* The solution which I am about to offer is wrought out with the most admirable simplicity and force in a treatise *On the Difference between Physical and Moral Law* (the Fernley Lecture of 1883), by Rev. William Arthur, M.A., which appeared some months after this Essay was published. It was also presented, in a less complete form, in an essay on *Prayer*, which I contributed to *The Expositor* for 1877.

for a man who had been for many years a doctor of divinity." It would not be difficult to go beyond Luther, and say, This heathen soldier reasons more fairly than many doctors of divinity —more logically and conclusively even than many philosophers and men of science, to whom doctors of divinity are a very little thing. So admirably does he dispute, that Jesus Himself discovers in his arguments the inspirations of faith, and declares with an accent of astonishment, "Verily, I have never found a faith so great as this, no, not even in Israel!"

Not in Israel? No; for the Jews sought a sign, and except they saw signs and wonders they would not believe. But the Centurion, so far from seeking a sign, declines one with gentle humility, and can believe though no wonder be wrought. "Heal my servant," he had cried, or, in his own soldierly phrase, "Heal *my boy*." "I will *come* and heal him," said Christ. "Come!" replied the Centurion. "But there is no need

to come. The powers of sickness and of health, all the forces of nature and of human nature, are at thy command, just as my soldiers and servants are at mine. I do not need to run on every errand myself; nor do you. I am *under* authority, and therefore I am *in* authority. I represent the Imperial power I serve; and therefore I can say to my soldiers, Go, and they go, or, Come, and they come; and to my servants, Do this or that, and they do it. You hold a commission from Heaven; and because you are *under* Divine authority, you *have* a Divine authority, and can send the forces of nature on your errands and compel them to do your bidding. Speak the word only, and my boy will be healed." Obviously he held that there was an analogy between the ruler of the Roman empire and the Lord and Governor of the universe, between himself and the Son of Man, and believed that Christ had such a delegated authority over the forces and laws of nature and

of human life as he himself exercised over the men of his "century" and the servants of his household. In short, the poor man was guilty of a crime of which in all probability he had never heard—the crime of anthropomorphism—a vice in logic, a sin in morals, if at least we are to listen to those who, when they do not claim a monopoly of logic, assume a certain easy supremacy in the court of Reason.

For this ancient and simple view of God, of his power to use the forces and laws of nature in his service and in the service of man, and even to delegate to others such a power of using them, stands at the farthest remove from that which obtains among those who style themselves the representatives of modern science and thought. They pronounce the Centurion and all who hold with him guilty of anthropomorphism in accents which assume anthropomorphism to be the one unpardonable sin. They affirm that we must on no account conceive

of God as such an one as ourselves—a very different thing, be it remembered, from conceiving of Him as "*altogether* such an one as ourselves"—or attribute to Him the qualities and affections which we ourselves possess. We can know nothing of Him, they assert, but that which nature teaches; or, at most, we must believe nothing of Him which is contrary and opposed to the teaching of the natural world. And as in that world we find simply physical forces which work by immutable laws, we may conceive of Him as like a force, or like a law, but must not think of Him as like a man. Miracles, therefore, are incredible, since it is impossible that God should ever interfere with the operation of immutable laws, laws which cannot be broken or set aside. And Prayer is as irrational as miracles are incredible; for if we ask of God only those things which would come to us in the common and established course of nature, why need we ask for them?

and if we ask that which He could give only by changing that course, we ask what it is impossible for Him to grant.

So that we have to choose between two theories of God; the ancient theory, that of the Centurion, which represents the forces and laws of nature as the servants of God, who do his pleasure, hearkening to the voice of his word; to whom He can say, Come, and they come, Go, and they go, Do this or that, and they do it: and the modern theory which represents them as so far his masters that He cannot touch or modify them, cannot bend them to his will, or bid them run on his errands, no, not even on the gravest emergencies, not even in order to teach men the truths they most need to know, or to save them from the sins by which they are being destroyed.

(29) Which of the two theories shall we choose? It is natural for us to prefer that of our own time. Many do prefer it; many more

are so shaken by it that they can no longer rest in the simpler theory of a bygone age. Yet we shall do well to pause before we adopt this modern theory, although it loudly claims to be the product of pure reason, and denounces its venerable rival as utterly irrational. Not that we for a moment question the right of men unversed in theology to pronounce an opinion on even the most profound and momentous of theological questions. If a soldier of the ancient world might "turn theologian," and is to be admired for it, surely a modern man of science may also do so at least unblamed, and argue "like a doctor of divinity," if he will and can. But when he argues, and before he claims any monopoly, or any superiority, of sound reasoning, he should at least be careful to make his argument both consistent and conclusive. He should not contradict himself, or put it into our power to confute him out of his own mouth. Yet this, and nothing

less than this, is precisely what those do who affirm that if we go to nature, and to nature alone, for our conception of God, we shall admit miracles to be impossible or incredible. Their argument must have a certain plausibility, or it would never have obtained so wide a vogue; it would neither be so constantly repeated by as many as reject at least the supernatural element of the Christian revelation, nor would it have so seriously staggered the faith of many who still accept that revelation. But no sooner do we carefully examine it than we discover it to be utterly unsound, and even in direct and flagrant contradiction to the most cherished convictions of the very men who advance it.

For consider what it is they really do. They bid us go to the natural world for our ruling, if not for our sole, conception of God and of the manner in which He stands related to human life and history. They say that we must believe nothing of Him which is incon

sistent with the teaching of that world. And they infer that any miraculous intervention in human affairs is incredible because, the laws of nature being immutable, they can never be bent or broken or overruled. What, then, is this natural world to which we are referred? Is it the whole realm of nature, or only a part of it? It is, as we learn to our amazement, only a part of it, and an inferior part. It is the natural world *with man left out*. To base any conception of God on the nature of man, on his intelligence, conscience, affection, is to be guilty of anthropomorphism. *Matter*-morphism —if, to make my meaning clear, I may use such horrible compounds—is, it would appear, a quite virtuous and reasonable procedure; but *man*-morphism is utterly irrational and vicious. To think of God as like a natural force, or as like the law by which that force is governed, or even as a vague stream of tendency, is legitimate and praiseworthy; but to think of God

as like a man, even when man is at his best and highest, is illegitimate to the last degree, and cannot be too severely condemned.

Yet man has always been regarded as the very flower and crown of nature; and we have been taught by science herself to attach a value to the human world, or even to any single man in it, which outweighs that of the whole material universe. Why, then, should it be a sin against reason to frame our conceptions of the Maker and Lord of the universe, at least in part, from that which is highest in it and most valuable? Should we not expect to get our best conceptions of the Highest from that which is confessedly the highest of his works? If we may take up into our conception the sense of force or power, and the sense of law or order, which we derive from the inanimate elements of nature, may we not also, and much more, take up into it the intelligence, the conscience, the affections which we find in her

animate elements? To refer us to the whole sum of the natural world, and then to strike out the chief factor—the human factor—of that world; is not that plainly illogical, unfair absurd?

(30) It is even more illogical and absurd now than in any previous age. For, not to stoop to the superstition of those who proclaim collective Man to be the only true God, many of our leading philosophers and men of science, while they bid us omit man from the sum of natural things, are teaching their disciples to rejoice in that potent word *Evolution* as the one key which unlocks all mysteries. *We* may doubt whether it is more than a name for one natural process out of many. We may ask permission to suspend our verdict until we are quite sure that no larger and higher law can be discovered than a law which does nothing to explain the origin whether of matter or force, life or thought. But those who regard

the law of evolution as proved beyond all doubt, and look down with superior scorn on as many of us as hesitate to pronounce it the last best gift of science, should at least remember that, on their own theory, man is more essentially than ever part, and the noblest part, of nature, the consummation and epitome of the universe; that in man nature presents us with the sum and crown evolved by the age-long action of the whole body of her forces and laws; and that therefore, if nature had a Maker, we must expect to find in man a more complete image and reflection of his character than in any or all other of the works of his hands. To say that nature flowers in the reason and will, the justice and love of man, and yet to contend that, while we may and ought to take up into our conception of God the suggestions of power and order conveyed by the lower and inanimate sphere of the universe, but are on no account to take up into it any suggestion derived from

its upper and animate sphere, is a contradiction so obvious and absurd that it must be scouted as soon as seen. It is to say, and to say in the name of Reason, that nature does not include her own last and highest product! It is to say, and to say in the name of Reason, that she does not include the last evolution and the highest expression of the whole sum of her forces and laws! Theologians have many unreasonable assertions to answer for, many fallacious arguments; but it would be hard to find in any of their works an assertion more unreasonable or an argument more absurdly illogical than this.

In a word, science, which has so long condemned anthropomorphism as a sin, is now compelled to pronounce it a virtue. Instead of banning it as illogical and unsound, she can but bless it as the only sound and rational method open to us. For if we are to go to nature for our conception of God, and if man be "the

roof and crown of things," the last evolution and highest expression of nature, where should we go, if not to him, for our truest and best conception of the Being who evolved him? From what *we* are, we can learn most surely what *He* is; from what *we* can do, we may most surely infer what *He* can do. Under pain of branding themselves as illogical and inconsistent, those who make their boast in Evolution must cease to sneer at anthropomorphism.

(31) But if, as science herself demands, we turn to animate as well as inanimate nature, to man as well as to matter, for our conception of God and of his relation to us, mark how, not only our doctrine of God, but also and mainly the whole question of miracles changes its form; and how the signs and wonders, so often pronounced incredible, grow to be something more than credible to us. To say that God cannot interfere with the action of his own laws, that He cannot so modify and overrule,

so hasten and retard their operation, as to produce what seem to us miraculous, *i.e.* strange and wonderful, effects, is to say that He can never do what man does every day:—which, were it true, would perhaps in some measure account for the fact that certain among us worship Man rather than God. For, obviously, man can, and does, both modify and overrule, both hasten and retard, the operation of natural forces and laws, and compel them in a thousand different ways to produce effects different from those which but for his interference they would have produced. Had man never intervened, England would have been parcel forest and parcel swamp to this hour, with a very different climate therefore to that which we now suffer or enjoy, and with a very different *flora* and *fauna* from that which it now possesses. In short, the physical conditions of the whole country have been modified and changed by the advent and will of man; while

in America the face of a whole continent has passed through a similar change almost within the memory of living men.

But when we use such illustrations as these when we say* that "there is not a single square inch in England, probably there is not a single square inch in the whole world, which is to-day what it would have been had it been left to the free play of purely physical forces," we use illustrations too large and manifold to be easily embraced and thought out. If we would grasp the immensity and the infinite variety of the changes wrought in the natural order by the force and wit of man, we must select some more limited example. And, possibly we could have no more striking and convenient example than this; that in almost every well-to-do house in England we have a long series of proofs, collected from almost every country under heaven, that the face of the whole land, and

* See p. 42.

even the face of the whole earth, has been changed in order to make that house what it is. When we go into and about such a house, what do we find? We find bricks brought from distant clay fields, stones dug from quarries still more distant, timbers from Norway or Sweden, marbles from Italy or Greece; carpets from Persian, Belgian, or Yorkshire looms; silks from India, China, or Japan; linen woven from Irish flax, and cottons from the Southern States of America; bread made from the wheats of Hungary, Russia, or the great Western States; coffee from the hills of Ceylon; rice from the swamps of Bombay or Italy; wines from France or Germany, Portugal or Spain; with a multitude of other necessary or precious things which it would be tedious to recount.

As we study the structure and contents of that one house, we feel that it is barely an exaggeration to say that the whole world has been taxed to build, furnish, and store it, and

that the whole face of the earth has been changed in its service. For we must remember that hardly any one of the articles I have named would have been produced at all had the natural forces been left to take their own course, had they never felt the hand of man or submitted to his control. *Nature* does not make bricks, or carve stones, or polish marbles, or weave carpets, silks, linen, cotton, or broadcloth, or make either bread or wine: of herself she cannot even grow a tea or a coffee which we should now deign to drink. All these things are monuments of the power of man, the trophies of his triumph over the forces and laws of the merely physical and inanimate world.

We must remember, too, that these productions imply the existence and activity of an immense array of cultivators, manufacturers, merchants, artists, brokers, tradesmen, and handicraftsmen, each of whom modifies

the action of natural laws with every breath he inspires, every step he takes, and whose main function it is to modify the action of natural forces, and compel them in countless forms to serve his will.

And we must also remember that, in the service of this one house, waggons are travelling along every road, trains running on every railway, boats plying on every river, ships crossing every sea, messages flying along every wire.

These, and the like, are the miracles, the signs and wonders, wrought by Man; and their name is Legion. By studying the forces and laws of Nature, he has learned to modify and control them; by serving, he rules them, bending them, unbending and immutable though they be, to the varying purposes of his will. Why, then, should it be thought a thing incredible that God—if there is a God and He is the Maker of men—should exercise a similar

and superior power over the forces and laws of the material world? Why should not He modify and control them far more subtly and more effectively than the creature He has made? He who created those forces, and gave those laws, must not He know them more comprehensively and intimately than we do who are still but stumbling over the very rudiments of knowledge; and, knowing them so much more perfectly, must He not be able to use them with a corresponding perfection? We touch them but from without; He from within. And if, even with our imperfect knowledge of them, and able only to lay a hand upon them from without, we have nevertheless so far bent them to our purpose as to harness them to our service and change the face of the world, what may not He do with them if He will; if, that is, He sees some worthy end, as, for example, the instruction or the salvation of mankind, to be answered by so using them as

to disclose his presence, convey his thought, reveal his love? Signs and wonders as far above "the reaches of our souls," as our signs and wonders are beyond the comprehension of a savage or a child, are not and cannot be impossible to Him—if at least we may draw our conceptions of Him, as science herself bids us draw them, from nature as revealed in man, the flower and cream of the natural world. If *we* can say to its forces and laws, Do this, and they do it; if we can bid them come and go on our errands; shall not *He*, who formed both us and them, be able to do as much with them as we, and even more than we?

(32) But many of our Lord's miracles, as also many of the miracles recorded in the Old Testament, were wrought on *men*, wrought to restore health to their bodies and sanity to their minds, to quicken them to the service and love of righteousness. And, therefore, if we would complete our argument, it is necessary

that, besides dwelling on the power of man over the physical world, we should at least glance at the immense power of man on men. To a reflective mind this latter power is far more wonderful, and often far more inexplicable, than the former; and the difficulty of dealing with it lies in part in its subtlety, but still more in the vast range of example and illustration open to us. As a direct and consciously exercised power, it is wonderful enough; but as an indirect and unconscious power, it is still more wonderful. History is full of examples, it is little more than a record, of the strange and marvellous influence on the fortunes of their fellows exerted by men of rare gifts and exceptional capacities. The sceptered dead still rule us from their graves. "Had there been no Luther," for instance, "the English, American, and German peoples would be thinking differently, would be acting differently, would be altogether different men and women from what

they are at this moment." * Nor is the influence of living men less remarkable. If use did not blunt and stale our minds, it would be nothing short of a perpetual marvel to us that from this little island, with its comparatively few inhabitants, no stronger and not much wiser than their neighbours, one-fourth of the human race, distributed over the whole globe, should be governed and controlled, and the whole human race be deeply influenced for good or evil. It is hardly going too far to say that the entire family of man, in all its branches, through all its millions, listens with attention to every public word that falls from the lips of our Queen; that an order from her sets the whole world in motion: and that no distinguished English statesman can make a speech on any public question but that it awakens echoes in every corner of the globe. But it is still more wonderful, perhaps, that

* J. A. Froude, on *Luther*, in *The Contemporary Review* for July, 1883.

a quiet thoughtful man, as yet unknown to fame, with no army and navy to back him, and no multitudinous array of servants to do his bidding, cannot sit down to write a book with a new thought in it, or that he cannot discover some new law of science or some new application of such a law, but that he too shall set the whole world in commotion, change and elevate the whole tone of civilized thought, or effect a revolution over the whole surface of civilized life. Such words and phrases as Steam, Gas, the Telegraph, the Electric Light, the Penny Post; Reform, Free Trade, Free Press; the Conservation of Energy, the Convertibility of Natural Forces, the Descent of Man, and the Survival of the Fittest, sum up in themselves the history of revolutions in the mind and life of humanity which we owe to men whose names might have been charged with no memories and illustrious with no distinctions but for the several discoveries they

have made or advocated. Men less famous than these, or whose names the world has forgotten, have discovered drugs, or sanitary and healing methods and conditions of human life, by which some forms of disease have been extirpated, while other forms have been modified and impaired, and by which the general average of health and length of days has been extended and raised. And, still more strange, there have been, there are, men among us who, simply by the sweet and happy composition of their nature, or by their force of will, or by their power of penetrating to the secret springs of motive and desire, are able to minister to minds diseased, as well as to diseased bodies, and to restore health and harmony to those whose mental or nervous forces are like sweet bells jangled and out of tune.

Again, we have only to remember what a power Righteousness is in human life, insomuch that even the worst of men will rally round

a man admitted to be just, and admire in him the purity and integrity which yet they themselves lack; and what a power Love is, quickening even the dullest to a more vivid life, and raising even the lowest to a higher life, to become aware of the strange forces which are hidden in our nature, of the singular and immense power which man may exert on man.

And if man can thus influence, heal, and elevate his fellows, why may not God influence men in a similar yet superior way? why may not those who are under his authority, and are therefore called to exercise his authority? And, above all, how can we pronounce it impossible that He who, at least on the Christian hypothesis, was at once both man and God, should influence, heal, and raise men far more subtly and more potently than they influence each other? If *we* tell upon each other for good in proportion to our natural and acquired force, in proportion to our wisdom, our righteousness,

our love, what must we expect and predicate of Him whose wisdom was without a flaw, whose righteousness was without a stain, and whose love knew no bounds?

The Psalmist demands, "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" And surely we may continue the catechism and ask, "He that gave man brain and conscience, will and heart, shall not He think of us and care for us? Shall He not be just? Shall He not love us and all men? He that teaches men to control by serving his laws, shall not He control them? He that gave them power to heal, shall not He heal? He that calls them to teach and help, to serve and save each other, shall not He teach and help, serve and save us all?" If we are to go to nature for our conception of God, we must go to man; for man is the sum and crown of nature. And if we go to man for our conception of Him and of his relation to

us, who does not see that we must go, for our conception of the Highest, to that which is highest in man—to his will, his wisdom, his justice, his love? Who will not admit that, since man works a thousand signs and wonders every hour, signs and wonders cannot be impossible to the Maker of men, that the forces and laws of nature and of human life must be far more perfectly under his control than they are under ours?

(33) In arguing thus, I do not in the least intend to cast any doubt on the fixity, the steadfastness, of natural laws. Nor can I admit the claim of modern men of science to be the first to promulgate and insist on the stability of these laws. In this as in much else, little as they seem to know it, "doctors of divinity" have anticipated them. The judicious Hooker, for example,* died long before any one of them

* For the following quotation from Hooker I am indebted to my friend Dr. Wace; see his *Gospel and its Witnesses*, Lecture vi., where he makes a very different but noble use of the passage.

was born; but which of them has set forth the immutability of natural law more statelily, impressively, and musically than he has done in a passage of his *Ecclesiastical Polity?* "If nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen or dissolve itself; if the celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should as it were through a languishing faintness begin to stand and rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused

mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influences . . . what would become of man himself, whom these things do now all serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world?"

No, we throw no doubt on the steadfast and unchangeable action of the forces and laws of nature. We do not assert that in working his miracles our Lord either violated, suspended, or abrogated them. All we affirm is that God may, and that Christ did, use them in ways too subtle and profound for us to grasp, yet in ways not wholly unlike to those in which we ourselves bend them to our service—using them to heal the sick, and give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, feet to the lame, and life to the dying, or even to the dead. In short, we affirm that He did perfectly and in full what even man may do imperfectly and in part. And we affirm

it, we argue for it from premisses which science herself has laid down, not only that the Bible miracles may be credible and reasonable to reasonable men—miracles which, as we have seen, are distributed through its pages with a singular economy, and are prompted by a motive so worthy, so divine; but also in order that we ourselves may believe that God, by secret ways past finding out—but which probably would be no whit more wonderful to us, if we could find them out, than our own control over the world and men—can still help, and heal, and save us; that He is not deaf to any of our prayers, or unable to answer them, but can still bestow wisdom and health, righteousness and love, on all who sincerely seek them at his hands.

(34) For, perhaps, the chief value of the Centurion's words lies in a suggestion which they still have to make to us: viz. that signs and wonders are not necessary or inevitable conditions, or concomitants, of miracles; but

that God, and the servants of God, may intervene for our instruction, our recovery to health, our salvation from every form of evil, even though no singular or striking event should call public attention to the work of power or of grace.*

If we suffer his words to enter into "the quick forge and working-house of thought," we may behold the scene which with a few rapid but graphic strokes he suggests. It is no unusual, no unique, no miraculous scene to which he points, but a scene of every-day life. In the simple discharge of his duty as master of a household, or as an officer in the Roman army, he issues commands to his men and servants, commands which they in their turn, and as part of their ordinary duty, at once obey. To this soldier he says, Go, and the man goes,

* "A miracle is not *a sudden blow struck in the face of nature*, but a *use of nature*, according to its inherent capacities of service, by higher powers."—Newman Smyth, *Old Faiths in New Light*,

and to that, Come, and the man comes: but had we seen his men moving through barrack or street at his command, we should have marked nothing strange in them, nothing to arrest attention, nothing even to denote the kind of errand on which they went, however singular that errand might have been in itself. And, in like manner, when he said to his servants, Do this, or, Do that, and they did it, had we beheld them as they went about house or market, we should have noticed nothing remarkable in their demeanour. Had we thought of them at all, we should simply have concluded that they were discharging the common household duties which fell to the servants of a man of his wealth and position. The level, matter-of-fact, matter-of-course tone which the Centurion maintains throughout his argument assures us that he was speaking only of the ordinary incidents of his life and vocation; and that when he asks Christ to "speak the word

only, and my boy will be healed," he was simply asking for what he conceived to be an ordinary incident in *his* life and vocation.

Yet what an amazing leap it seems to us from the one series of facts to which he alludes to the other! Our Authorized Version omits the "also" from St. Matthew's report of the phrase, "I *also* am a man under authority"; and perhaps our Revisers have done us no more notable service than in restoring the word to its true place: for when one thinks of it, the word fairly trembles and staggers under its load of meaning. "I *also*"; "I *as well as you*"; "I *like you*": what an audacious feat it appears to us that this heathen soldier should compare himself, should *even* himself, as the Scotch say, to the Lord of glory; how it astonishes us that a man so humble should yet be so bold! For what he really means and implies is nothing less than this: "As I hold a commission from Cæsar, so you hold a commission from God,

Because you are under his authority, you wield his authority. All the forces and laws of nature and of human life are at your command because they are at his command. Even as they go about their ordinary work, they do his will; and they will run on your errands as they run on his. You need not come to my poor house and strike your hand over the palsied and trembling limbs of my poor boy. Speak the word only, give the order, utter the command, and it will be obeyed as surely and as quietly as my soldiers go on my errands and obey my word."

This was the Centurion's conception of God and of his relation to the realm of nature; and nothing can be plainer than that he conceived of the natural forces and laws as *always* doing the will of God, however quietly or secretly they went on their several paths, however usual and ordinary their tasks. Nothing can be plainer than that he believed that one who was clothed

with God's authority could also command them, and would be obeyed by them as simply and as promptly as God Himself. Nothing can be plainer than that he thought miracles *natural* in a miraculous personage, the ordinary and inevitable incidents and consequents of a Divine vocation or commission; and even that he held a miracle to be more and not less miraculous if it were wrought without pomp or show, without arresting attention or compelling astonishment.

And what we have specially to mark is, that this is not only the Centurion's conception of God and of his relation to the universe, but that it is also Christ's. For Christ Himself emphatically adopts it. In the face of this narrative it is vain for any man to contend, as some have contended, that though miracles have been freely attributed to the Son of Man, yet He Himself with his sane intellect, his sweet reasonableness and clear veracity, never claimed miraculous power. He claims it here. When

Jesus had heard how the Centurion conceived of Him and of his authority, He "marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And we know what *He* meant by "faith." To Him faith was the eye and the hand of the soul, the faculty by which men come to know things as they are in themselves, by which they behold and grasp the eternal facts and verities that underlie the shows of time. He approved, therefore, the Centurion's mode of conceiving God and God's power over the natural world; He adopted it and made it his own. It comes to us clothed with his authority who spake as never man spake, and to whom even those who resent and condemn all faith in miracles defer as at least the wisest and best of men, the greatest teacher of truth the world has ever seen.

So that in choosing between the two theories of which I spoke at the outset, the ancient

simple theory and the modern sceptical theory, we really have to decide between the authority of Christ, who was not of an age but for all time, and that of men who claim, although their claim is traversed by scientists as learned and able as themselves, to be the representatives of modern science and thought;* that is to say,

* As from the space they contrive to fill in the public eye, and the confident tone in which they address the public ear, many young and ignorant people are under the impression that the sceptical and materialistic school embraces most of the real leaders or most eminent professors of science, it may be worth while to jot down as they occur to me the names of a few of the eminent men of science who cannot see "the promise and the potency of all things" in matter, but, on the contrary, maintain the spiritual origin of the universe, and worship the God whom their opponents are so eager to dethrone. I must not, I suppose, include in my list Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Newton, Pascal, lest they should be objected to as not modern enough; though he must be strangely ignorant who should imagine that they had not weighed and rejected the arguments for materialism which even now carry any real weight. But who will question the attainments and authority of such men as Faraday, Sir David Brewster, De Morgan, Herschell, Agassiz, Clerk-Maxwell, Henry Smith, Balfour Stewart, Tait, Stokes, Rolleston, Sir William Thompson?

Nor for myself can I admit for a moment that the study of

we have to choose between their authority and that of One whom even they themselves confess

science confers any special right to speak with authority on the questions discussed in this essay. For they are religious questions rather than scientific, and religious men of large intellect and wide learning have surely as clear a right to be heard on them as the men who have distinguished themselves as mathematicians or physicists: such men, for example, as Bishops Thirlwall and Lightfoot, Archbishop Thomson, Cardinal Newman, Deans Stanley, Plumptre, Church, Canons Mozley, Cook, Westcott, Barry, Drs. Salmon (of Dublin), Wace, Dale, Tulloch, A. B. Davidson, Robertson Smith, Dykes, Maclaren, with Maurice, Robertson, Lynch, and a hundred more who might be named.

If we suspect both men of science and men of religion of bias, conscious or unconscious, fit umpires might be found between them in the great poets, statesmen, judges, artists, who have done most to shape and rule our thoughts; or who by their great natural gifts, wide and varied knowledge of men and affairs, or their trained impartiality, would command our profoundest respect: such men as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, or Gladstone, Lords Selborne, Cairns, Coleridge, or Carlyle, Ruskin, Kingsley, Holman Hunt.

Nothing would be easier than to add largely to all these lists did time and space permit. But the names cited will suffice to call up many more, and to shew the young or credulous how far it is from being true that the set of the best thought of the day, in any province of human activity, is toward the dreary and irrational materialism which a few able men, followed by many who, save for their atheism, would in no way be distin-

to have been far better and wiser than themselves, entitled therefore to speak, at least on all religious questions, with an authority transcending their own. And if we defer to what, in various indirect ways, as well as by direct confession, they themselves admit to be the higher authority of the two, is there anything unreasonable in that?

(35) It may still further assist us in our decision if we remember that on this point at least, these representatives of modern and *advanced* thought, really occupy the position held two thousand years ago by the ignorant Jewish bigots who rejected Christ and put Him to death, hoping that by quenching the Light of the world they might be left at peace in the darkness which, for a well-known reason, they preferred. For, like the Jewish Pharisees and

guished from their fellows, are so eager to promulgate. The assumption that all logic and all ability are on the side of unbelief is an old weapon with its advocates. It has been used again and again, but never with less excuse than now.

their scribes, our modern sceptics will not believe unless they themselves see signs and wonders. They reach their end indeed by a different road to that along which the Jewish bigots travelled; but what of that if at last we find them standing side by side? The Jews did not for a moment doubt that God both could and did interfere with the operation of natural forces and laws, or that He could delegate that power to men; but they would not believe that He had delegated that power to Jesus of Nazareth, since Jesus refused to work in their presence the kind of miracle which they demanded. Modern sceptics, on the other hand, refuse either to believe that God ever did exercise this power, or commission men to exercise it. But on what ground do they refuse? Simply on the ground that any such interference is contrary to their own experience and to their reading of the experience of their fellows. Before they will believe, they demand

that some miracle should be wrought in their presence, and submitted to their tests. In fine, they too must see signs and wonders or they will not believe. Like the Jews, they must have the very proof they demand before they will yield to the claim of the Son of Man.

How they will like the company into which they are thus brought, it is not for me to say; but I do not see how they can deny that they are fairly brought into it, that they have brought themselves into it, and occupy the very ground on which the ignorant and furious bigots took their stand who rejected the testimony of God against themselves twenty centuries ago.

(36) And why should they maintain a position which its ancient defenders have rendered so suspicious? How can they reasonably charge us with a sin against reason if we abandon it? Only two hypotheses lie before us. The first is that which assumes that, because we see in

nature an impersonal order, there is nothing more in it, an assumption which fails to account even for the origin of matter and force; an assumption which is obviously untrue, since every man finds in nature at least one personality —his own—and is compelled therefore to believe in other personalities than his own. The second hypothesis is that which assumes that, because we are conscious of a living spirit within ourselves, the physical universe must be, if not the body, at least the handiwork and garment of a quickening Spirit, Almighty and Divine. This second hypothesis not only accounts for the origin of matter, energy, life, as well as for the order of the universe, but it also alleges a cause equal to all the effects we discover in the whole round of being. It accounts for the existence of intelligence and will, conscience and heart, as well as for the existence of material atoms and forces, and the laws by which they are controlled. It is the larger and the more

natural, it is the only adequate, and therefore the only reasonable, hypothesis; as indeed even sceptical men of science, leaders in the opposing school of thought, have admitted or affirmed. Thus, for example, John Stuart Mill, brushing aside the prepossessions and prejudices of a lifetime, has recorded his final and deliberate judgment,* that there is a large balance in favour of the probability of *creation by intelligence;* and Mr. Wallace, who shares with Darwin the honour of what many esteem the most fruitful discovery of modern science, confesses,† "It does not seem improbable that all force may be *will* force, and that the whole universe is not merely dependent upon, but actually *is*, the will of higher intelligences, or of one Supreme Intelligence."

In the face of these arguments and admissions, it is surely the height of unreason to charge us

* *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 174.

† *Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection*, p. 368.

with unreasonableness if we give the preference to that hypothesis which attributes both the creation and the evolution of the universe to a living and life-giving Spirit rather than to an impersonal order or law which really accounts for nothing, but has itself to be accounted for; if we take our stand by the side of the Centurion, and conceive of the forces and laws of nature as the obsequious servants of an all-seeing Wisdom and an almighty Power.

(37) Nor can those who hold man to be the sum and crown of things, the last and highest product of natural forces and laws, and therefore the glass in which the Maker of all things is most clearly and fully reflected, reasonably condemn the belief in *Miracles* as irrational. There is a modern school of Theology as well as a modern school of Science. It is this modern theology which modern science is bound to meet. To insist on the definitions and refute the arguments of our fathers is no more fair

on their part than it would be fair on ours to run riot among, and hold them responsible for, the exploded scientific hypotheses of bygone ages. And we of the modern school do not contend, whatever our fathers may have done, that laws of nature must be suspended, abrogated, or reversed, whenever a miracle is wrought. We say that they must be *used* by an Intelligence infinitely higher than ours, and therefore an Intelligence which may well produce effects most strange and wonderful to us.* We point to the use which man has made of them in a thousand different ways—by his use of them changing the face of the whole world; and we argue that God may use them, for worthy ends, still more potently and admirably. In nature

* I do not, however, claim this as a purely modern discovery. Even Augustine must have had some glimpse of it when he wrote (*Contra Faustum*, xxvi. 3): "God does nothing against nature. When we say that He does so, we mean that He does something against nature *as we know it*—in its familiar and ordinary way; but against the highest laws of nature He no more acts than He acts against Himself."

herself, we say, there are the materials by which men are fed, healed, taught, served, and forces by which, according at least to the fashionable theory of the time, life is for ever being evolved from lifelessness. Man has learned so to employ these forces and materials as to compel them to minister, in ways beyond the reach of unassisted nature, to his nourishment, his health, his service. Why, then, we ask, should it be deemed impossible for God so to use these forces and laws, so to modify and control, so to hasten and retard their operation, as to feed and heal, to teach and serve men, and even to give life to the dying or the dead in ways beyond the measure of our minds? Is there anything unreasonable in that?

(38) But if God holds all the forces and laws of nature in the hollow of his hand, and can use them for our good in ways unknown and perhaps undiscoverable by us, not only do the miracles of the Bible grow credible to us so

soon as we have evidence for them on which we can depend ; but we also condemn ourselves as unreasonable if we any longer doubt the efficacy of *Prayer*. And of all the implications of the Centurion's argument, this, to my mind, is the most valuable and delightful, as it is also the most obvious and direct. For what we need most of all, as we stand hesitating and bewildered among the perplexities of life and conduct, is the conviction that we have a living God who is still active, still working in and for us, to whom we can appeal, in whom we can trust, who will listen to us and answer us when we call on Him for teaching, guidance, strength ; and who can work miracles of grace for us even though signs and wonders be no longer vouchsafed us. *This* is the conviction which sustained the Centurion when he brought his prayer to Christ, and which Christ Himself sanctioned and confirmed by his admiration and approval of the Centurion's faith. He might have had

a sign, a portent if he would but, strong in faith, he preferred a simple word, and no more doubted that that word would be obeyed than that his own word of command would be obeyed by those who served under him. Obviously he believed that the forces and laws of nature, animate and inanimate, were always doing the will of God, and that the Servant and Son of God, *without any signal or exceptional exertion of his power*, could heal his "boy," and would heal him if He felt that it was for the good of both servant and master that the "boy" should be healed. And this is the very conviction which we require in order to give depth and devotion, courage and hope, alike to our supplications and our lives. Why should we not cherish it and lean upon it? If God knows the natural forces and laws as we cannot know them, if He can and does use and control them for our good and for the general good; if, as we see, He does feed and heal, teach, guide, and

sustain men by his wise use and administration of them, and that in ways past finding out; why should not we ask of Him whatsoever things we need, or think the world needs, in the full assurance that He will listen to us, and either grant what it is really for our good to have, or teach us that his will is wiser and kinder than our own? On this hypothesis, urged in this spirit, Prayer is not unreasonable, but most reasonable; and we may, we ought to lay the *un*flattering but most cordial and invigorating unction to our souls, that, if we commit our way unto the Lord, He will give us the desire of our hearts.

(39) These, then, are the facts, and this is the argument which, as they should know, the sceptics and agnostics of the present day have to explain and refute before they can claim the attention of thoughtful and candid men. These facts and this argument are not stated here for

the first time. They have been stated again and again for the last thirty or forty years; and that by men of sufficient note; by such men, for example as Bersier of Paris, Godet of Neufchatel, Horace Bushnell, Newman Smyth, Phillips Brooks, Henry Ward Beecher, Theodore Munger, of America; by Thirlwall, Maurice, Erskine (of Linlathen), Kingsley, Stanley, Wace, Abbott, Lynch, Dale, Edward White, Martineau, and many more, in England. In short, they are the common property of that broader and more advanced school of thought in the Christian world which answers most nearly to the Darwinian school in the scientific world; though, for the special form in which they appear in this Essay, I am mainly indebted to Smyth's *Old Faiths in New Light* (in Chapter I.), to Godet's *Lectures in Defence of the Christian Faith* (in Chapter II.), and to an essay on *Prayer* in the *Expositor* for 1877 (in Chapter III.). And I think we may fairly challenge a reply to it, precisely

because it is not the product of a single mind, but the common property of a large and growing school of thought. As yet, however, I have not met with a single serious attempt to answer it; nor, indeed, with any serious attempt to understand how the Bible reads, to those who believe in it, in the light of the new scholarship and exegesis. Our modern sceptics, at least on the scientific side, so far as they condescend to argue with us, are content to ignore the last and most generous reading, and to carry themselves as though the Roman or the Puritan, the Sacerdotal or the Calvinistic interpretation of the Biblical documents were all they had to meet; which is about as fair as if *we* should content ourselves with refuting the objections to the Christian Faith raised by the sceptics of the pre-Darwinian, or even of the pre-Keplerian and pre-Newtonian age, before Science had learned to utter "that sweet word" Evolution—a feat of which it is now so proud that it grows angry

should one venture to hint that it may some day learn to pronounce a still larger and nobler word. Should, however, any man of science undertake to reply to this argument, we can promise him that many will listen to him with the most profound and eager interest, and will honestly confess the force of his argument at any point at which they may find themselves unable to meet it. And, till then, we who accept the new theology can afford to take very calmly the charge of a bigoted insensibility to reason so often alleged against us by votaries of the new science.

Indeed it may and ought to be said, even in the interest of science itself, that the charge of bigotry comes with an ill grace from the lips of men who kindle into an Athanasian ire against all who do not instantly accept as true what they themselves must acknowledge to be an unverified, though most probable, hypothesis. Bigotry, alas, is confined to no school of thought,

though it is never so out of place as in the school of Christ. It is the offspring of ignorance and ill-will; and is, it may be feared, quite as commonly found among those who profess to know as among these who profess to believe. For while it would be easy to name many a defender of the Faith who has honestly weighed the latest hypothesis of science, and frankly accepted its "discoveries," it would not be so easy to name sceptical men of science who have earnestly studied the Bible for themselves, and have shewn an equal desire to weigh what it has to urge in its own behalf. And this, I think, we may fairly say, that until they meet the Christian argument in its best and most reasonable form, the form given to it by its most enlightened advocates; so long as they assume, for instance, that the Book of Genesis puts forward a scientific cosmogony obviously untenable, or that the Church still holds a miracle to be an infraction of law, or that the New

Testament either demands belief in doctrines rather than a good life, or teaches men to neglect the duties of this world in order to secure bliss in the world to come, and so makes selfishness rather than love its prime motive, or that it condemns the vast majority of men to an endless torment,—they shirk the real difficulties of the problem, evade the best and most advanced statement of the Christian hypothesis, and, in fine, behave themselves as foolishly as would the theologian or divine who should refute the scientific hypothesis in vogue a century ago, and pass by the science of to-day.

THE END.

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